

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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IS HE POPENJOY?

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER XXXIV. A DREADFUL COMMUNICATION.

"A MOST dreadful communication!" There was something in Lord George's voice, as he uttered these words, which so frightened his wife that she became at the moment quite pale. She was sure, almost sure from his countenance, that the dreadful communication had some reference to herself. Had any great calamity happened in regard to his own family he would not have looked at her as he was now looking. And yet she could not imagine what might be the nature of the communication. "Has anything happened at Manor Cross?" she asked.

"It is not about Manor Cross."

"Or your brother?"

"It is not about my brother; it does not in any way concern my family. It is about you."

"About me! Oh, George! do not look at me like that. What is it?"

He was very slow in the telling of the story; slow even in beginning to tell it; indeed, he hardly knew how to begin. "You know Miss Augusta Mildmay?" he asked.

Then she understood it all. She might have told him that he could spare himself all further trouble in telling, only that to do so would hardly have suited her purpose; therefore she had to listen to the story, very slowly told. Miss Augusta Mildmay had written to him, begging him to come to her. He, very much astonished at such a request, had nevertheless obeyed it; and Augusta Mildmay had assured him that his wife, by wicked wiles and

lures, was interfering between her and her affianced lover, Captain De Baron. Mary sat patiently till she had heard it all—sat almost without speaking a word; but there was a stern look on her face which Lord George had never seen there before. Still he went on with his determined purpose. "These are the kind of things which are being repeated of you," he said at last. "Susanna made the same complaint. And it had reached Brotherton's ears. He spoke to me of it in frightfully strong language. And now this young lady tells me that you are destroying her happiness."

"Well?"

"You can't suppose that I can hear all this without uneasiness."

"Do you believe it?"

"I do not know what to believe. I am driven mad."

"If you believe it, George—if you believe a word of it, I will go away from you. I will go back to papa. I will not stay with you to be doubted."

"That is nonsense."

"It shall not be nonsense. I will not live to hear myself accused by my husband as to another man. Wicked young woman! Oh, what women are, and what they can do! She has never been engaged to Captain De Baron."

"What is that to you or me?"

"Nothing, if you had not told me that I stood in her way."

"It is not her engagement, or her hopes, whether ill or well founded, or his treachery to a lady, that concerns you and me, Mary; but that she should send for me and tell me to my face that you are the cause of her unhappiness. Why should she pitch upon you?"

"How can I say? Because she is very wicked."

"And why should Susanna feel herself obliged to caution me as to this Captain De Baron? She had no motive. She is not wicked."

"I don't know that."

"And why should my brother tell me that all the world is speaking of your conduct with this very man?"

"Because he is your bitterest enemy. George, do you believe it?"

"And why, when I come home with all this heavy on my heart, do I find this very man closeted with you?"

"Closeted with me!"

"You were alone with him."

"Alone with him! Of course I am alone with anyone who calls. Would you like me to tell the servant that Captain De Baron is to be excluded, so that all the world might know that you are jealous?"

"He must be excluded."

"Then you must do it. But it will be unnecessary. As you believe all this, I will tell my father everything and will go back to him. I will not live here, George, to be so suspected that the very servants have to be told that I am not to be allowed to see one special man."

"No; you will go down into the country with me."

"I will not stay in the same house with you," she said, jumping up from her seat, "unless you tell me that you suspect me of nothing—not even of an impropriety. You may lock me up, but you cannot hinder me from writing to my father."

"I trust you will do nothing of the kind."

"Not tell him! Who then is to be my friend if you turn against me? Am I to be all alone among a set of people who think nothing but ill of me?"

"I am to be your friend."

"But you think ill of me."

"I have not said so, Mary."

"Then say at once that you think no ill, and do not threaten me that I am to be taken into the country for protection. And when you tell me of the bold-faced villany of that young woman, speak of her with the disgust that she deserves; and say that your sister Susanna is suspicious and given to evil thoughts; and declare your brother to be a wicked slanderer, if he has said a word against the honour of your wife. Then I shall know that you think no ill of me; and then I shall know that I may lean upon you as my real friend."

Her eyes flashed fire as she spoke, and he was silenced for the moment by an impetuosity and a passion which he had not at all expected. He was not quite disposed to yield to her, to assure her of his conviction that those to whom she had alluded were all wrong, and that she was all right; but yet he was beginning to wish for peace. That Captain De Baron was a pestilential young man, whose very business it was to bring unhappiness into families, he did believe; and he feared also that his wife had allowed herself to fall into an indiscreet intimacy with this destroyer of women's characters. Then there was that feeling of Caesar's wife strong within his bosom, which he could, perhaps, have more fully explained to her but for that unfortunate letter from Mrs. Houghton. Any fault, however, of that kind on his part was, in his estimation, nothing to a fault on the part of his wife. She, when once assured that he was indifferent about Mrs. Houghton, would find no cause for unhappiness in the matter. But what would all the world be to him if his wife were talked about commonly in connection with another man? That she should not absolutely be a castaway would not save him from a perpetual agony, which he would find to be altogether unendurable. He was, he was sure, quite right as to that theory about Caesar's wife, even though, from the unfortunate position of circumstances, he could not dilate upon it at the present moment. "I think," he said, after a pause, "that you will allow that you had better drop this gentleman's acquaintance?"

"I will allow nothing of the kind, George. I will allow nothing that can imply the slightest stain upon my name or upon your honour. Captain De Baron is my friend. I like him very much. A great many people know how intimate we are. They shall never be taught to suppose that there was anything wrong in that intimacy. They shall never, at any rate, be taught so by anything that I will do. I will admit nothing. I will do nothing myself to show that I am ashamed. Of course you can take me into the country; of course you can lock me up; of course you can tell all your friends that I have misbehaved myself; you can listen to calumny against me from everybody; but if you do I will have one friend to protect me, and I will tell papa everything." Then she walked away to the door as though she were leaving the room.

"Stop a moment," he said. Then she

stood with her hand still on the lock, as though intending to stay merely till he should have spoken some last word to her. He was greatly surprised by her strength and resolution, and now hardly knew what more to say to her. He could not beg her pardon for his suspicion; he could not tell her that she was right; and yet he found it impossible to assert that she was wrong. "I do not think that passion will do any good," he said.

"I do not know what will do any good. I know what I feel."

"It will do good if you will allow me to advise you."

"What is your advice?"

"To come down to the country as soon as possible, and to avoid, as far as possible, seeing Captain De Baron before you go."

"That would be running away from Captain De Baron. I am to meet him at Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball."

"Send an excuse to Mrs. Montacute Jones."

"You may do so, George, if you like. I will not. If I am told by you that I am not to meet this man, of course I shall obey you; but I shall consider myself to have been insulted—to have been insulted by you." As she said this his brow became very black. "Yes, by you. You ought to defend me from these people who tell stories about me, and not accuse me yourself. I cannot and will not live with you if you think evil of me." Then she opened the door and slowly left the room. He would have said more had he known what to say. But her words came more fluently than his, and he was dumfounded by her volubility; yet he was as much convinced as ever that it was his duty to save her from the ill-repute which would fall upon her from further intimacy with this captain. He could, of course, take her into the country to-morrow, if he chose to do so; but he could not hinder her from writing to the dean; he could not debar her from pen and ink and the use of the post-office; nor could he very well forbid her to see her father.

Of course, if she did complain to the dean, she would tell the dean everything. So he told himself. Now, when a man assumes the divine superiority of an all-governing husband, his own hands should be quite clean. Lord George's hands were by no means clean. It was not, perhaps, his own fault that they were dirty. He was able at any rate to tell himself that the fault had not been his. But there

was that undoubted love-letter from Mrs. Houghton. If the dean were to question him about that he could not lie. And though he would assure himself that the fault had all been with the lady, he could not excuse himself by that argument in discussing the matter with the dean. He was in such trouble that he feared to drive his wife to retaliation; and yet he must do his duty. His honour and her honour must be his first consideration. If she would only promise him not willingly to see Captain De Baron, there should be an end of it, and he would allow her to stay the allotted time in London; but, if she would not do this, he thought that he must face the dean and all his terrors.

But he hardly knew his wife—was hardly aware of the nature of her feelings. When she spoke of appealing to her father, no idea crossed her mind of complaining of her husband's infidelity. She would seek protection for herself, and would be loud enough in protesting against the slanderous tongues of those who had injured her. She would wage war to the knife against the marquis, and against Lady Susanna, and against Augusta Mildmay, and would call upon her father to assist her in that warfare; but she would not condescend to allude to a circumstance which, if it were an offence against her, she had pardoned, but as to which, in her heart of hearts, she believed her husband to be, if not innocent, at least not very guilty. She despised Adelaide Houghton too much to think that her husband had really loved such a woman, and was too confident in herself to doubt his love for many minutes. She could hate Adelaide Houghton for making the attempt, and yet could believe that the attempt had been futile.

Nevertheless, when she was alone she thought much of Mrs. Houghton's letter. Throughout her interview with her husband she had thought of it, but had determined from the very first that she would not cast it in his teeth. She would do nothing ungenerous. But was it not singular that he should be able to upbraid her for her conduct—for conduct in which there had been no trespass, knowing as he must have known, feeling as he must have felt, that every word of that letter was dwelling in her memory! He had, at any rate, intended that the abominable correspondence should be clandestine. He must have been sadly weak, to make the least of it, to have admitted such a correspondence.

"Pray tell me that you love me!" That had been the language addressed to him only a few days since by a married lady to whom he had once made an offer of marriage; and yet he could now come and trample on her as though his marital superiority had all the divinity of snow-white purity! This was absolute tyranny. But yet in complaining to her father of his tyranny she would say nothing of Adelaide Houghton. Of the accusations made against herself she would certainly tell her father, unless they were withdrawn as far as her own husband could withdraw them. For an hour after leaving him her passion still sustained her. Was this to be her reward for all her endeavours to become a loving wife?

They were engaged to dine that evening with a certain Mrs. Patmore Green, who had herself been a Germain, and who had been first cousin to the late marquis. Mary came down dressed into the drawing-room at the proper time, not having spoken another word to her husband, and there she found him also dressed. She had schooled herself to show no sign either of anger or regret, and as she entered the room said some indifferent words about the brougham. He still looked as dark as a thunder-cloud, but he rang the bell and asked the servant a question. The brougham was there, and away they went to Mrs. Patmore Green's. She spoke half-a-dozen words on the way, but he hardly answered her. She knew that he would not do so, being aware that it was not within his power to rise above the feelings of the moment. But she exerted herself so that he might know that she did not mean to display her ill-humour at Mrs. Patmore Green's house.

Lady Brabazon, whose sister had married a Germain, was there, and a Colonel Ansley, who was a nephew of Lady Brotherton's; so that the party was very much a Germain party. All these people had been a good deal exercised of late on the great Popenjoy question. So immense is the power of possession that the marquis, on his arrival in town, had been asked to all the Germain houses in spite of his sins, and had been visited with considerable family affection and regard—for was he not the head of them all? But he had not received these offers graciously, and now the current of Germain opinion was running against him. Of the general propriety of Lord George's conduct ever since his birth there had never been a doubt, and the Greens and

Brabazons and Ansleys were gradually coming round to the opinion that he was right to make enquiries as to the little Popenjoy's antecedents. They had all taken kindly to Mary, though they were, perhaps, beginning to think that she was a little too frivolous, too fond of pleasure for Lord George. Mrs. Patmore Green, who was the wife of a very rich man, and the mother of a very large family, and altogether a very worthy woman, almost at once began to whisper to Mary: "Well, my dear, what news from Italy?"

"I never hear anything about it, Mrs. Green," said Mary, with a laugh.

"And yet the dean is so eager, Lady George!"

"I won't let papa talk to me about it. Lord Brotherton is quite welcome to his wife and his son, and everything else for me—only I do wish he would have remained away."

"I think we all wish that, my dear."

Mr. Patmore Green, and Colonel Ansley, and Lady Brabazon all spoke a word or two in the course of the evening to Lord George on the same subject, but he would only shake his head and say nothing. At that time this affair of his wife's was nearer to him, and more burdensome to him, than even the Popenjoy question. He could not rid himself of this new trouble even for a moment. He was still thinking of it when all the enquiries about Popenjoy were being made. What did it matter to him how that matter should be settled, if all the happiness of his life were to be dispelled by this terrible domestic affliction? "I am afraid this quarrel with his brother will be too much for Lord George," said Mr. Patmore Green to his wife, when the company were gone. "He was not able to say a word the whole evening."

"And I never knew her to be more pleasant," said Mrs. Patmore Green. "She doesn't seem to care about it the least in the world." The husband and wife did not speak a word to each other as they went home in the brougham. Mary had done her duty by sustaining herself in public, but was not willing to let him think that she had as yet forgiven the cruelty of his suspicions.

CHAPTER XXXV. "I DENY IT."

DURING the whole of that night Lord George lay suffering from his troubles, and his wife lay thinking about them. Though the matter affected her future life almost more materially than his, she had the

better courage to maintain her, and a more sustained conviction. It might be that she would have to leave her home and go back to the Deanery, and in that there would be utter ruin to her happiness. Let the result, however, be as it would, she could never own herself to have been one tittle astray, and she was quite sure that her father would support her in that position. The old "ruat cælum" feeling was strong within her. She would do anything she could for her husband short of admitting, by any faintest concession, that she had been wrong in reference to Captain De Baron. She would talk to him, coax him, implore him, reason with him, forgive him, love him, and caress him. She would try to be gentle with him this coming morning. But if he were obdurate in blaming her, she would stand on her own innocence and fight to the last gasp. He was supported by no such spirit of pugnacity. He felt it to be his duty to withdraw his wife from the evil influence of this man's attractions, but felt, at the same time, that he might possibly lack the strength to do so. And then, what is the good of withdrawing a wife, if the wife thinks that she ought not to be withdrawn? There are sins as to which there is no satisfaction in visiting the results with penalties. The sin is in the mind, or in the heart, and is complete in its enormity, even though there be no result. He was miserable because she had not at once acknowledged that she never ought to see this man again, as soon as she had heard the horrors which her husband had told her. "George," she said to him at breakfast the next morning, "do not let us go on in this way together."

"In what way?"

"Not speaking to each other—condemning each other."

"I have not condemned you, and I don't know why you should condemn me."

"Because I think that you suspect me without a cause."

"I only tell you what people say!"

"If people told me bad things of you, George—that you were this or that, or the other—should I believe them?"

"A woman's name is everything."

"Then do you protect my name. But I deny it. Her name should be as nothing when compared with her conduct. I don't like to be evil spoken of, but I can bear that, or anything else, if you do not think evil of me—you and papa." This reference to her father brought back the black

cloud which her previous words had tended to dispel. "Tell me that you do not suspect me."

"I never said that I suspected you of anything."

"Say that you are sure that in regard to this man I never said, or did, or thought anything that was wrong. Come, George, have I not a right to expect that from you?" She had come round the table and was standing over him, touching his shoulder.

"Even then it would be better that you should go away from him."

"No!"

"I say that it would be better, Mary."

"And I say that it would be worse—much worse. What? Will you bid your wife make so much of any man as to run away from him? Will you let the world say that you think that I cannot be safe in his company? I will not consent to that, George. The running away shall not be mine. Of course you can take me away, if you please, but I shall feel——"

"Well!"

"You know what I shall feel. I told you last night."

"What do you want me to do?" he asked, after a pause.

"Nothing."

"I am to hear these stories and not even to tell you that I have heard them?"

"I did not say that, George. I suppose it is better that you should tell me. But I think you should say at the same time that you know them to be false." Even though they were false, there was that doctrine of Cæsar's wife which she would not understand! "I think I should be told, and then left to regulate my own ways accordingly." This was mutinously imperious, and yet he did not quite know how to convince her of her mutiny. Through it all he was cowed by the remembrance of that love-letter, which, of course, was in her mind, but which she was either too generous or too wise to mention. He almost began to think that it was wisdom rather than generosity, feeling himself to be more cowed by her reticence than he would have been by her speech.

"You imagine, then, that a husband should never interfere."

"Not to protect a wife from that from which she is bound to protect herself. If he has to do so, she is not worth the trouble, and he had better get rid of her. It is like preventing a man from drinking by locking up the wine."

"That has to be done sometimes."

"It sha'n't be done to me, George. You must either trust me, or we must part."

"I do trust you," he said at last.

"Then let there be an end of all this trouble. Tell Susanna that you trust me. For your brother and that disappointed young woman I care nothing. But if I am to spend my time at Cross Hall, whatever they may think, I should not wish them to believe that you thought evil of me. And, George, don't suppose that because I say that I will not run away from Captain De Baron, all this will go for nothing with me. I will not avoid Captain De Baron, but I will be careful to give no cause for ill-natured words." Then she put her arm round his neck, and kissed him, and had conquered him.

When he went away from the house he had another great trouble before him. He had not seen Mrs. Houghton as yet, since his wife had found that love-letter; but she had written to him often. She had sent notes to his club almost wild with love and anger—with that affectation of love and anger which some women know how to assume, and which so few men know how to withstand. It was not taken to be quite real, even by Lord George; and yet he could not withstand it. Mrs. Houghton, who understood the world thoroughly, had become quite convinced that Lady George had quarrelled with her. The two women had been very intimate ever since Lady George had been in town, and now for the last few days they had not seen each other. Mrs. Houghton had called twice, and had been refused. Then she had written, and had received no answer. She knew then that Mary had discovered something, and, of course, attributed her lover's absence to the wife's influence. But it did not occur to her that she should, on this account, give up her intercourse with Lord George. Scenes, quarrels, reconciliations, troubles, recriminations, jealousies, resolves, petty triumphs, and the general upsetting of the happiness of other people—these were to her the sweets of what she called a passion. To give it all up because her lover's wife had found her out, and because her lover was in trouble, would be to abandon her love just when it was producing the desired fruit. She wrote short letters and long letters, angry letters, and most affectionate letters to Lord George at his club, entreating him to come to her, and almost driving him out of his wits. He had, from the first, determined that he would go to her. He had even received

his wife's sanction for doing so; but, knowing how difficult it would be to conduct such an interview, had, hitherto, put off the evil hour. But now a day and an hour had been fixed, and the day had come. The hour had very nearly come. When he left his house there was still time for him to sit for awhile at his club, and think what he would say to this woman.

He wished to do what was right. There was not a man in England less likely to have intended to amuse himself with a second love within twelve months of his marriage than Lord George Germain. He had never been a Lothario—had never thought himself to be gifted in that way. In the first years of his manhood, when he had been shut up at Manor Cross, looking after his mother's limited means, with a full conviction that it was his duty to sacrifice himself to her convenience, he had been apt to tell himself that he was one of those men who have to go through life without marrying—or loving. Though strikingly handsome, he had never known himself to be handsome. He had never thought himself to be clever, or bright, or agreeable. High birth had been given to him, and a sense of honour. Of those gifts he had been well aware and proud enough, but had taken credit to himself for nothing else. Then had come that startling episode of his life, in which he had fallen in love with Adelaide De Baron, and then the fact of his marriage with Mary Lovelace. Looking back at it now, he could hardly understand how it had happened that he had either fallen in love or married. He certainly was not now the least in love with Mrs. Houghton. And, though he did love his wife dearly, though the more he saw of her the more he admired her, yet his marriage had not made him happy. He had to live on her money, which galled him, and to be assisted by the dean's money, which was wormwood to him. And he found himself to be driven whither he did not wish to go, and to be brought into perils from which his experience did not suffice to extricate him. He already repented the step he had taken in regard to his brother, knowing that it was the dean who had done it, and not he himself. Had he not married, he might well have left the battle to be fought in after years—when his brother should be dead, and very probably he himself also.

He was aware that he must be very firm with Mrs. Houghton. Come what might, he must give her to understand

quite clearly that all love-making must be over between them. The horrors of such a condition of things had been made much clearer to him than before by his own anxiety in reference to Captain De Baron. But he knew himself to be too soft-hearted for such firmness. If he could send someone else, how much better it would be! But, alas! this was a piece of work which no deputy could do for him. Nor could a letter serve as a deputy. Let him write as carefully as he might, he must say things which would condemn him utterly were they to find their way into Mr. Houghton's hands. One terrible letter had gone astray, and why not another?

She had told him to be in Berkeley Square at two, and he was there very punctually. He would at the moment have given much to find the house full of people; but she was quite alone. He had thought that she would receive him with a storm of tears, but when he entered she was radiant with smiles. Then he remembered how on a former occasion she had deceived him, making him believe that all her lures to him meant little or nothing, just when he had determined to repudiate them because he had feared that they meant so much. He must not allow himself to be won in that way again. He must be firm, even though she smiled. "What is all this about?" she said in an affected whisper, as soon as the door was closed. He looked very grave and shook his head. "'Thou canst not say I did it. Never shake thy gory locks at me.' That wife of yours has found out something, and has found it out from you, my lord."

"Yes, indeed."

"What has she found out?"

"She read a letter to me which you sent to the club."

"Then I think it very indecent behaviour on her part. Does she search her husband's correspondence? I don't condescend to do that sort of thing."

"It was my fault. I put it into her hand by mistake. But that does not matter."

"Not matter! It matters very much to me, I think. Not that I care. She cannot hurt me. But, George, was not that careless, very careless; so careless as to be—unkind?"

"Of course it was careless."

"And ought you not to think more of me than that? Have you not done me an injury, sir, when you owed me all solicitude and every possible precaution?" This was not to be denied. If he chose

to receive such letters, he was bound at any rate to keep them secret. "But men are so foolish—so little thoughtful! What did she say, George?"

"She behaved like an angel."

"Of course. Wives in such circumstances always do. Just a few drops of anger, and then a deluge of forgiveness. That was it, was it not?"

"Something like it."

"Of course. It happens every day, because men are so stupid, but at the same time so necessary. But what did she say of me? Was she angel on my side of the house as well as yours?"

"Of course she was angry."

"It did not occur to her that she had been the interloper, and had taken you away from me?"

"That was not so. You had married."

"Psha! Married! Of course I had married. Everybody marries. You had married; but I did not suppose that for that reason you would forget me altogether. People must marry as circumstances suit. It is no good going back to that old story. Why did you not come to me sooner, and tell me of this tragedy? Why did you leave me to run after her and write to her?"

"I have been very unhappy."

"So you ought to be. But things are never so bad in the wearing as in the anticipation. I don't suppose she'll go about destroying my name and doing me a mischief?"

"Never."

"Because if she did, you know, I could retaliate."

"What do you mean by that, Mrs. Houghton?"

"Nothing that need disturb you, Lord George. Do not look such daggers at me. But women have to be forbearing to each other. She is your wife, and you may be sure I shall never say a nasty word about her, unless she makes herself very objectionable to me."

"Nobody can say nasty things about her."

"That is all right, then. And, now, what have you to say to me about myself? I am not going to be gloomy because a little misfortune has happened. It is not my philosophy to cry after spilt milk."

"I will sit down a minute," he said, for hitherto he had been standing.

"Certainly; and I will sit opposite to you—for ten minutes, if you wish it. I see there is something to be said. What is it?"

"All that has passed between you and me for the last month or two must be forgotten."

"Oh, that is it!"

"I will not make her miserable, nor will I bear a burden upon my own conscience."

"Your conscience! What a speech for a man to make to a woman! And how about my conscience? And then one thing further. You say that it must be all forgotten?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Can you forget it?"

"I can strive to do so. By forgetting, one means laying it aside. We remember chiefly those things which we try to remember."

"And you will not try to remember me—in the least? You will lay me aside like an old garment? Because this—angel—has come across a scrawl which you were too careless either to burn or to lock up! You will tell yourself to forget me, as you would a servant that you had dismissed, much more easily than you would a dog? Is that so?"

"I did not say that I could do it easily."

"You shall not do it at all. I will not be forgotten. Did you ever love me, sir?"

"Certainly I did. You know that I did."

"When? How long since? Have you ever sworn that you loved me since this—angel—has been your wife?" Looking back as well as he could, he rather thought that he never had sworn that he loved her in these latter days. She had often bidden him to do so; but as far as he could recollect at the moment, he had escaped the absolute utterance of the oath by some subterfuge. But doubtless he had done that which had been tantamount to swearing; and, at any rate, he could not now say that he had never sworn. "Now you come to tell me that it must all be forgotten! Was it she taught you that word?"

"If you upbraid me I will go away."

"Go, sir, if you dare. You first betray me to your wife by your egregious folly, and then tell me that you will leave me because I have a word to say for myself. Oh, George, I expected more tenderness than that from you."

"There is no use in being tender. It can only produce misery and destruction."

"Well, of all the cold-blooded speeches I ever heard, that is the worst. After all that has passed between us, you do not scruple to tell me that you cannot even express tenderness for me, lest it should

bring you into trouble! Men have felt that before, I do not doubt; but I hardly think any man was ever hard enough to make such a speech. I wonder whether Captain De Baron is so considerate?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"You come here and talk to me about your angel, and then tell me that you cannot show me even the slightest tenderness, lest it should make you miserable, and you expect me to hold my tongue."

"I don't know why you should mention Captain De Baron."

"I'll tell you why, Lord George. There are five or six of us playing this little comedy. Mr. Houghton and I are married, but we have not very much to say to each other. It is the same with you and Mary."

"I deny it."

"I daresay; but at the same time you know it to be true. She consoles herself with Captain De Baron. As to you and me, you used, I think, to get consolation here. But such comforts cost trouble, and you hate trouble." As she said this, she wound her arm inside his; and he, angry as he was with her for speaking as she had done of his wife, could not push her from him roughly. "Is not that how it is, George?"

"No!"

"Then I don't think you understand the play as well as I do."

"No, I deny it all."

"All?"

"Everything about Mary. It's a slander to mention that man's name in connection with her—a calumny which I will not endure."

"How is it, then, if they mention mine in connection with you?"

"I am saying nothing about that."

"But I suppose you think of it. I am hardly of less importance to myself than Lady George is to herself. I did think I was not of less importance to you."

"Nobody ever was or ever can be of so much importance to me as my wife, and I will be on good terms with no one who speaks evil of her."

"They may say what they like of me?"

"Mr. Houghton must look to that."

"Is it no business of yours, George?"

He paused a moment, and then found the courage to answer her. "No—none," he said. Had she confined herself to her own assumed wrongs, her own pretended affection—had she contented herself with quarrelling with him for his carelessness, and had then called upon him for some

renewed expression of love—he would hardly have been strong enough to withstand her. But she could not keep her tongue from speaking evil of his wife. From the moment in which he had called Mary an angel, it was necessary to her comfort to malign the angel. She did not quite know the man, or the nature of men generally. A man, if his mind be given that way, may perhaps with safety whisper into a woman's ear that her husband is untrue to her. Such an accusation may serve his purpose. But the woman, on her side, should hold her peace about the man's wife. A man must be very degraded indeed if his wife be not holy to him. Lord George had been driving his wife almost mad during the last twenty-four hours, by implied accusations, and yet she was to him the very holy of holies. All the Popenjoy question was as nothing to him in comparison with the sanctity of her name. And now, weak as he was, incapable as he would have been, under any other condition of mind, of extricating himself from the meshes which this woman was spinning for him, he was enabled to make a most salutary plunge by the genuine anger she had produced. "No—none," he said.

"Oh, very well. The angel is everything to you, and I am nothing?"

"Yes; my wife is everything to me."

"How dared you, then, come here and talk to me of love? Do you think I will stand this—that I will endure to be treated in this way? Angel, indeed! I tell you that she cares more for Jack De Baron's little finger than for your whole body. She is never happy unless he is with her. I don't think very much of my cousin Jack, but to her he is a god."

"It is false."

"Very well. It is nothing to me; but you can hardly expect, my lord, that I should hear from you such pleasant truths as you have just told me, and not give you back what I believe to be truth in return."

"Have I spoken evil of anyone? But I will not stay here, Mrs. Houghton, to make recriminations. You have spoken most cruelly of a woman who never injured you, who has always been your firm friend. It is my duty to protect her, and I shall always do so in all circumstances. Good morning." Then he went before she could say another word to him.

He would perhaps have been justified had he been a little proud of the manner

in which he had carried himself through this interview; but he entertained no such feeling. To the lady he had just left he feared that he had been rough and almost cruel. She was not to him the mass of whipped cream turned sour which she may perhaps be to the reader. Though he had been stirred to anger, he had been indignant with circumstances rather than with Mrs. Houghton. But in truth the renewed accusation against his wife made him so wretched that there was no room in his breast for pride. He had been told that she liked Jack De Baron's little finger better than his whole body, and had been so told by one who knew both his wife and Jack De Baron. Of course there had been spite, and malice, and every possible evil passion at work. But then everybody was saying the same thing. Even though there were not a word of truth in it, such a rumour alone would suffice to break his heart. How was he to stop cruel tongues, especially the tongue of this woman, who would now be his bitterest enemy? If such things were repeated by all connected with him, how would he be able to reconcile his own family to his wife? There was nothing which he valued now but the respect which he held in his own family and that which his wife might hold. And in his own mind he could not quite acquit her. She would not be made to understand that she might injure his honour and destroy his happiness even though she committed no great fault. To take her away with a strong hand seemed to be his duty. But then there was the dean, who would most certainly take her part—and he was afraid of the dean.

MAKING READY AT WOOLWICH.

WOOLWICH is just now tuneful, not exactly with the clink and fall of swords, but with that of instruments compared with which the mightiest of swords is but a toothpick. In speaking of Woolwich, I may premise that my remarks are confined to that part of it known as the Royal Arsenal, and by no means extend to the town itself. Considered as a town, Woolwich is one of those odd places which convey a remarkable idea of the aridity of the military throat—their chief trade being in the dispensing of beer by retail. There are many places of this kind, notably Sheerness and Chatham, where nothing

seems to grow but soldiers, sailors, tarpaulin suits, and beer; but it is not with the consumption of intoxicating liquors that I have now to deal, my business being chiefly to see Britannia hard at it in one of her greatest workshops, with her sleeves tucked up, and her mind addressed to the production of weapons, great and small, to the end that her watery empire may not become a mere empty boast of the past.

The great gun factory just now in full blast is one of the most interesting sights in England, the famous works of Sheffield, and the Whitworth factory at Manchester, not excepted. Since the inauguration of the Age of Peace and Brotherhood at the Great Exhibition of 1851, Britannia has very sensibly kept a sharp look-out for improvements in artillery and musketry, and some other engines of war, of which more presently. Between the great mortar, nicknamed "Big Will," and the guns at present made, there is the difference not of years but of centuries—the science of artillery having been twice reversed since that great gun hurled its enormous shell into the air. The great battle of breech-loaders and muzzle-loaders has been fought—that is to say, in part, for it would be as ridiculous to assume that perfection has been attained in artillery as in anything else. So far as great ordnance is concerned, the world has already changed its mind several times as to the proper end of a gun to receive the charge.

Military museums afford abundant proof of the antiquity of breech-loading cannon. The precise construction of the guns used at the battle of Crécy can only be conjectural, but breech-loaders, certainly as old as the Tudor period, and one probably of the time of Henry the Sixth, are still to be seen at the Museum of the United Service Institution. There lie the old guns, breech-pieces and all, which sank in the Mary Rose, and which, by their rough workmanship, account for the accidents which oftentimes befell ancient bombardiers. It was these accidents which probably led to the abandonment of the breech-loading system, and the employment of muzzle-loaders for the last two centuries. The old cast-iron gun may be seen at Woolwich and other places in its original form, and also in the various stages of conversion into the weapon for the moment in favour.

A great revolution was brought about by the new rifled breech-loaders, introduced by Sir William Armstrong. To

those unacquainted with the former slowness of military reform, it may appear incredible that rifled muskets existed for a hundred years before rifled ordnance; but the fact is indisputable, and the combination of rifling and breech-loading by Sir William Armstrong may be accepted as a new point of departure in the history of English artillery. Sir William's invention was by no means the only one experimented upon. The conical, or at any rate the long, as distinguished from the spherical, bullet was advocated by a variety of inventors. There was the Lancaster shell, and the flat-headed steel bolt projected from a polygonal bore, still adhered to by Sir Joseph Whitworth; but, after a variety of trials, the Armstrong gun was chosen. The shot for this gun was coated with lead to make it fit into the grooves of the barrel, and thus acquire that rotatory motion by which accuracy of flight is secured to rifle-bullets of all sizes and shapes. For a while, the virtues—and they are many—of the Armstrong gun were loudly extolled, but it was not long before complaints arose against this supposed perfect cannon. The old vice of the breech-loader gave it an evil reputation among those who had to manage it in actual warfare. Owing either to negligence in charging, or to some other cause, accidents occurred so frequently that, with much reluctance, the gun which attracted more spectators than any other object at the Second Great Exhibition of Peaceful Industry in 1862, became discredited at Woolwich, and the entire system of our ordnance was revolutionised. The Armstrong gun was not disused; it is in use now; a large number being in course of repair at this moment in a kind of hospital for worn and injured guns, which forms part of the Arsenal—but its further introduction was stopped, and the "Woolwich system," as it is called, adopted in its place. This is a modification of the canon rayé, which made as much noise in the campaign which freed Italy from the Austrian yoke, as did the needle-gun in that of Sadowa. Foreign nations are not quite so communicative as we are, and the late Emperor of the French had, at least, one virtue—that of holding his tongue. It is not my purpose to open a discussion concerning the actual inventor of the studded projectile. Many clever men thought that the device of coating an iron shot or shell with lead to make it "bite" into the grooves of the rifled cannon was a mistake, and pro-

posed in its stead that studs or wings of copper or brass should be attached to the plain iron or steel shot, in such order as to fit into the grooves. Plans for projectiles on this system were submitted to and ignored by the English authorities, and also, ostensibly, by the French emperor. While, however, several inventors were waiting for the patronage of the French Government, the emperor was quietly at work making canons rayés and "studded" projectiles. When the Solferino campaign commenced, very few people knew anything about the new rifled cannon, which were privately sent to Genoa, and there put upon their carriages. The effect of those guns was so remarkable, as to produce a great influence on the campaign, and the canons rayés were the talk of artillerists. In the year 1859, however, Britannia had, by the advice of the Rifle Cannon Committee, already adopted the Armstrong system, and, despite the great practical test undergone by the canons rayés, stuck to it for some years, during which many thousands of Armstrong guns were introduced into her service.

The advocates of muzzle-loaders were not satisfied, and gathering strength with time, at last succeeded in stopping, as I have already pointed out, the further introduction of Armstrong guns, and in substituting for them a muzzle-loading rifled cannon, bored with a few deep grooves, into which fit the copper studs of the shot; and it is the manufacture of these guns and this peculiar ammunition that is now going on so briskly at Woolwich. The new gun may be briefly described as a steel tube, covered with successive strengthening pieces of wrought iron. It is a steel-lined gun in fact; the steel bore being covered by wrought-iron coils, so disposed as to enable the gun to bear the "transverse" strain of the discharge without bursting, while the breech end is supported by a solid forged breech-piece of enormous strength, to resist the "longitudinal" strain. These successive coils are shrunk on to the gun, and the result is a tube of twice the strength that could be obtained by ordinary forging.

On this plan a vast number of guns have been constructed, and many more are being produced with all possible speed. In the great open space in front of the Gun Factory are regiments of guns—mostly of enormous size, ranging from twelve tons upwards. The "Woolwich Infant," once an object of wonder, is now an ordinary

article of production—the staple, as it were, of Britannia's workshop. With years the "Infant" has grown, and weighs no longer thirty-five, but thirty-eight tons. It is now completely dwarfed by the eighty-one ton guns, four of which are now being made for the Inflexible. It is important that the best metal should be used for these enormous weapons of war, and to that end Britannia buys largely of scrap iron, which undergoes infinite forging and welding before its fragments are brought together in the vast masses seen in the Arsenal on every side. Forged and rolled into bars of various sizes, the metal is at last ready for coiling into one of the great pieces to be afterwards shrunk on to the gun. The huge bar welded, forged, and rolled, is heated to a white heat in the furnace, from which one end is drawn out and fixed on a revolving coil, or mandril, as it is technically called. As the mandril turns slowly round, it wraps itself in a glowing coil of living fire, which clings round and round it, ring by ring, like a gigantic boa-constrictor. When complete, the coil is a hollow cylinder, with the successive rings imperfectly joined, and needing, therefore, a further process of forging. This forging of the breech-piece of an eighty-one ton gun is a sight to remember, and can only be witnessed in perfection at night.

Imagine a great dark space into which we have penetrated from the rain and fog outside. Through the gloom move dusky figures, and at one extremity of this Hall of Eblis is gathered a knot of visitors specially invited to witness the most brilliant scene that Woolwich can afford—a night-forging. As our eyes become accustomed to the gloom, we make out the dim outline of the great steam-hammer, and the enormous pincers and cranes which look like instruments of torture for Titans under "the question." All at once there is a cry of surprise. The front of the furnace has gone up, disclosing the interior of a blazing cavern. In the midst stands a gigantic cylindrical frame of iron at a white heat, suggesting to a hungry guest a comparison with a vast Stilton cheese well scooped out. There is no difficulty in moving this enormous mass of incandescent iron. The great cranes move slowly round, and the Titan pincers seize it with a terrible grip. Again the cranes move, and the blazing coil is swung under the giant hammer. This celebrated instrument is an admirable illustration of real power. There is in its work none of the fuss and

clatter of such tiny hammers as deal with tin-tacks or ten-penny nails. Silently but surely it descends, and drives with resistless force the coils closer together. The forty-ton hammer seems to administer rather a friendly persuasive tap than a crushing blow, but the effect is startling. The coils close perceptibly, and there is a mighty splash from the blazing coil which sheds liquid flame on every side under the blow. Tears of burning metal pour out on every side as the hammer comes down again and again upon the great coil, driven by every blow closer and closer together. Shorter and shorter it grows with each persuasive tap, until the forging is completed, and the Titan pincers remove the trunnion-piece from beneath its tormentor.

When built up of coils all wound together, subsequently welded as just described, and then shrunk one on the other, the great guns of Woolwich pass into the hands of an army of workmen. Let us glance at the turning-shop. Here are mighty monsters slowly revolving, while their exterior is being turned to its proper shape. As we step in, one of the "Infants" is undergoing the operation of having ribbands of iron cut from his epidermis. As he goes round and round, a sharp cutting edge takes off a ribband of iron several inches wide and curling round like a wood shaving. An idea of the enormous pressure employed can be easily got by putting the hand near the ribband, which comes off scalding hot. Another beautiful operation is the boring of the lining-tube out of a solid block of toughened steel. Immense pressure is required to enable the cutter to do its work, and a stream of cold water is constantly poured into the grooving tube to reduce the heat generated by the operation. They are busy in the boring-mill, as everywhere else at Woolwich just now, and the skilful workmen watch their powerful machinery with a keen eye. Akin to the boring-machine is that used for rifling—a work requiring great delicacy and absolutely perfect accuracy. It must be remembered that the efficiency of every gun and every shot depends upon the perfectly accurate fit of the grooves in the barrel, and the huge and costly studded projectile prepared for it. The cutting of these grooves is therefore a serious matter, and is only entrusted to men who are as careful as they are skilful, for the slightest blunder would damage a gun gravely if not irretrievably. There is no appearance of bustle in these departments, no sign of haste.

Saving the inevitable rattle of machinery, the work goes on in silence, every man being intent on the task set him.

When all these numerous operations, including the sighting and proving of the gun, are complete, the "Infant" is blackened and "passed into store." Not only guns are made at Woolwich but ammunition, and in this department the present activity is very marked. It is of course much quicker and easier work to make shot than guns, but great care and accuracy is needful even in this subordinate department. Thousands upon thousands of shot and shell have been turned out recently, and the immense ammunition factory is filled with projectiles of the new shape, in every stage of construction. It is extremely interesting to watch the process of manufacturing the elaborate projectiles which have taken the place of the old segment shell and spherical shot. On the ground outside the foundry are great heaps of old shot. These are broken with a hammer into pieces of convenient size, and are then taken to the row of cupolas for melting down into fluid metal. While this process is going on, the moulders are seen busily at work preparing the sand receptacles for the iron. The shot now made is of two kinds, known as "common" and "Palliser." Projectiles are again divided into shot, shell, and shrapnel. The shot is a solid iron cone of the form familiar to everybody; the common shell contains a cavity to hold the bursting charge; and the shrapnel shell is of a peculiar construction, to be described presently. The peculiarity of the Palliser projectile, invented to pierce iron plates, is that it is not cast entirely in a sand mould, but with its head in an iron chill. The mould is very ingeniously made, and is perfect, even to the holes left to receive the copper studs to be hereafter fixed. Round the casting-pit move the foundrymen, who have already fixed the sand-moulds, each on an iron chill, and arranged them in a circle. Others are busy removing the previous castings, and burying them in the ground that they may not cool too rapidly and crack. In the present busy time at Woolwich, we find no difficulty in following the immense shot for the "Infants" from the melting-pot to the store, as work is being pushed forward vigorously in every department. Our Palliser shell having cooled off properly, and shown neither crack nor flaw, is now ready to be ground to gauge; so hard and brittle is the metal that it cannot be turned in a lathe, and

must therefore have any slight inequalities removed by the grindstone. Being perfect as to size, the projectile, which when finished weighs about nine hundred pounds, is next tested, and then undergoes a remarkable course of treatment. Workmen stand before machines, on each of which a shell is slowly turning round; as it revolves the workman picks up cylindrical lumps of copper from a basket before him, and deftly drops one into each of the spaces left in casting, for its reception. As it leaves his hand, the copper stud travels underneath a hammer which gives it a friendly tap in passing; this tap drives the copper into its place so firmly, as to make it an integral part of the shot, leaving just as much above its level as is needed to catch the grooves of the gun-barrel. The studding of the shot, however, is not yet complete. The ponderous cone is swung by tackle on to other machines, in which the copper studs are cut and planed down to the exact height and shape required. Swiftly and deftly performed, these operations excite admiration at the skill which devised the beautiful machinery, which appears to go about its work like an intelligent being. Supposing the shot to be solid, there is not much more to be done to it, save to blacken it all over, except in the case of the Palliser projectile, the apex of which is painted white, to distinguish it from the "common" kind. Shrapnel, however, has yet to go through a special course of treatment. A shrapnel shell may be shortly described as a cast-iron hollow cylinder, with a wooden conical head fitted on to it. Around and above the powder chamber, the internal space is filled with leaden bullets for small shrapnel, and cast-iron grape-shot for shells of larger size. A small army of men and boys is employed in filling in these shells; every precaution being adopted to make their deadly effect as certain as possible. To ensure the scattering of the bullets when the shell bursts, resin is being poured in to fill up the spaces between them, as it has been found in practice that, without this, they are apt to clog together and not to kill one-tenth of the people they are intended to destroy. Woolwich is turning out a great store of shrapnel, which has entirely superseded the grape and canister of former days. The latter is only available at very short range, but shrapnel can be hurled for an immense distance with all the effect of a discharge of musketry at old-fashioned distance. On the wharf,

which extends along the whole river-front of the Arsenal, are now accumulating thousands of those deadly missiles. All the military and naval depôts ask for ammunition, but Woolwich appears equal to the demand.

Not only projectiles for the eighty-one-ton gun—costing some five-and-twenty pounds apiece—and others for the "Infants" of about half the weight and price, are made at Woolwich. There are pretty little toys in the way of shrapnel, for instance, weighing seven pounds only, to suit the "mountain gun," a useful instrument for bringing the "noble savage" to book, but not rising to the dignity of historic warfare. Smaller deer than even these scientific playthings engage the attention of Woolwich. Rifled muskets are not made on the site of the old rabbit-warren and Prince Rupert's tower, but the cartridges for them are. Now the modern cartridge is as serious an affair as the modern rifle. In the bygone days of Der Freischütz, rifle-shooting was a very different affair from the routine business now so well known to all of us—thanks to the volunteer movement. The old-fashioned rifleman, Kuno, head-ranger to the Grand Duke of Schloss-Windbeutel, used a rifle as unlike the Martini-Henry or the Snider as could well be imagined. Into the nature of Caspar's gun and bullets it is needless to enquire; but it is perfectly well known how Kuno's weapon was constructed, and what he did with it. It was a heavy grooved rifle, with a rather sharper twist than that now in fashion. Kuno carried with him a quantity of apparatus besides his flint-lock gun. He had two powder-horns, one for loading and the other for priming; he had a store of wadding and of greased circles of leather, and a little hammer. When he loaded his gun he gave his mind to a very serious operation. First of all he wiped out his gun carefully, then poured in his coarse powder and wad, and rammed all down. He next took a greased piece of leather, or, in default of leather, of linen, and placed this over the muzzle of his gun. In this greased disc was laid the old-fashioned spherical bullet, too large to enter the barrel without persuasion. This he applied with the hammer before mentioned, driving the ball by main strength into the muzzle, and then forcing it down with the ramrod. He then primed his gun with some very fine powder, and if his hand were steady, and both flint and steel were in good condition,

all went well. Excellent shooting was made with these old rifles, within, of course, a far more limited range than that of the last new improvements. Whatever may be thought of the comparative merits of breech and muzzle loading in the case of infallible artillery, there is little doubt that the breech-loader has, as a small-arm, completely superseded its sometime rival. Hence the cartridges made at Woolwich for the Snider and Martini-Henry rifles contain all the work which our old friend Kuno was obliged to perform for himself. The complex character of these cartridges is well and briefly described by Major Majendie: "The Boxer service cartridge for the Snider rifle consists of a case of thin brass, rolled into a cylinder, and covered with paper, by which the coil is cemented together. The coiled case is fitted into a double base-cup of brass, with an iron disc forming the end of the cartridge which abuts against the breech-block of the rifle. The case is secured in its position by means of a rolled paper wad inside, which is squeezed out with great force against the sides of the case. The iron base is attached to the cartridge by means of the copper "cap-chamber," which contains the detonating arrangement; the cap-chamber, being riveted over at each end, holds the base tightly to the cartridge. The ignition is effected by means of a percussion cap, resting on a small shouldered brass anvil in the base of the cartridge. To explode the cap, it is necessary that the crown of the cap should be indented—by the striker of the rifle, for example—when the detonating composition is brought into contact with the anvil, and the flash passes through the fire hold at the bottom of the cap-chamber to the powder in the case. The top of the cartridge is closed by means of a small quantity of wool, over which is fitted the bullet. This bullet has four grooves or cannelures round it, which serve to carry the wax lubrication."

Each of these little bits, which go to make up a cartridge, requires a separate set of mechanical appliances. A series of machines is necessary for the bullet alone. The first cuts a bit off a lead rod, and gives it a rude flowerpot-like form; the next turns up its edge, and two others form the internal cavity, which lightens the bullet at the conical end. Another set of machinery is employed for making the clay plugs which fit into the base of the bullet. Some very pretty work is

turned out in the appliances for the propelling end of the cartridge. The iron base is cut out and bevelled as to its orifice by one machine; another makes the copper cap which holds all together; and others, again, are engaged in making the cap which contains the detonating powder and the anvil which, when struck by the "needle" of the gun, explodes the cartridge. All the machines are attended by boys—very smart lads, indeed, quick of eye and hand, and glib of tongue, too, when they have an opportunity. For charging, the cartridges, like the great shells, are removed from the workshops, and when ready for work are consigned to the floating magazine. Several millions of these complex Snider and Martini-Henry cartridges are turned out every week at Woolwich.

There is yet another department among many at Woolwich especially interesting to friends at home and abroad—especially the latter; but for once the large-hearted, if somewhat thick-headed, Briton, has put on his considering-cap, and decided to keep the intelligent foreigner out of this particular corner of the Arsenal. Dame Britannia has for a long time past had specimens of the Whitehead torpedo in her possession—and very wonderful things they are, as Mr. Whitehead has found to his advantage in his manufactory on the Adriatic Sea near Fiume. The Whitehead or fish-torpedo is the beautiful engine of war which sent Lord Charles Beresford in a transport of delight to the House of Commons, then and there to declare his belief that "it could do anything but talk." It is a wonderful instrument, or rather combination of instruments. Outwardly its outline is that of a cigar, pointed at both ends, and of shining steel. Throughout the greater part of its length it is supplied with a dorsal and pectoral fin of steel, which give it a certain resemblance to a fish, and prevent it rolling over. At the bow, or striking end, is the percussion apparatus, communicating with a charge of gun-cotton powerful enough to blow the side out of the mightiest iron-clad yet built. This occupies one-third of its length, and behind it is the mysterious submerging apparatus and the machinery for working the screw-propeller. These ingenious appliances occupy the middle compartment, the third being a receptacle for the compressed air which supplies the motive power. It is beautiful to see the Whitehead torpedo sink to the exact depth required, and then shoot off in the pre-

scribed direction, like some great fish, but endowed with intelligence superior to that vouchsafed to the pisces. There is, however, not much secret about its construction, as specimens can be bought for money of Mr. Whitehead, who is ready to serve all customers for cash; but little is known concerning the new engine constructed at Woolwich, and called the Laboratory torpedo, which possesses all the other qualities of the Whitehead with twice its speed. A submarine engine travelling at the rate of forty miles an hour is a wonder indeed; and, as the authorities at Woolwich hope, will remain one. The days of wooden walls have long since gone by, and the trust of Britannia can no longer be in courage and seamanship alone, but in infallible artillery and the mysterious monsters with which science, when war again breaks out, will people the great deep.

OLD FRENCH ACTORS.

TALMA.

AFTER the death of Lekain, tragedy in France—at least so far as its male representatives were concerned—had fallen to a comparatively low ebb, and bade fair to degenerate even more rapidly, when the advent of a new candidate for popular favour suddenly arrested its downward progress, and raised it to a pitch of excellence which, if equalled, has hardly been surpassed at any previous period of its history. At the epoch of which we speak, Brizard had left the stage; Larive, still a member of the *Comédie Française*, was failing in health, and played but rarely; and although neither Mdlle. Sainval the younger, Madame Vestris, nor Mdlle. Raucourt had as yet retired, they were but inadequately supported by St. Prix, Monvel, and the emphatic St. Fal. Comedy, on the other hand, had perhaps never been more brilliantly interpreted; Dazincourt, Molé, Fleury, Dugazon, and Mdlle. Contat presented an ensemble such as even in its best days the national theatre had seldom boasted. Such was the state of things when a young man, unknown and unprotected, appeared to take up the gauntlet in behalf of the tragic muse; and it is possible that a slight record of the career of this adventurous champion, destined to effect a revolution in the drama of his time, may be neither deemed inappropriate nor uninteresting.

François Joseph Talma was born in Paris, January 15, 1763, a day celebrated

in theatrical annals as the anniversary of the birth of Molière. His father, a dentist established in London, and enjoying a fair amount of practice, intended him to follow the same profession; and after sending him to prosecute his studies in his native city, instructed him on his return to England in the elements of surgery. By way of relaxation, he was permitted to frequent the society of several young compatriots also settled in London; and these being all more or less dramatic enthusiasts, their leisure hours were mainly employed in organising amateur performances of French comedies, which eventually attracted the notice of certain eminent connoisseurs, one of whom, Lord Harcourt, struck by the precocious talent displayed by the youthful Talma, strongly advised him to try his fortune on the English stage. This project, if ever seriously entertained, was not destined to be realised, for we find him shortly after again in Paris, attending surgical lectures with tolerable assiduity, but still secretly cherishing the idea of becoming an actor.

It is probable that his frequent visits to the *Comédie Française*, and the encouragement he received from some of its leading members, especially Dugazon, decided his future career; but before definitively abandoning the profession he had already begun to exercise, he determined to abide by the judgment of those best qualified to estimate his ability. With this view, after having taken lessons in declamation from Molé, he invited the persons of his acquaintance whose opinion he desired to ascertain, to be present at a performance of *Iphigénie en Tauride* at Doyen's private theatre, in which he purposed playing Oreste. The result of this essay by no means responded to his expectations. The spectators, with one exception, pronounced the attempt a failure, Mdlle. Sainval the younger alone dissenting from the general verdict, and recognising amid the natural defects of inexperience a germ of future excellence, which only needed cultivation to ensure its speedy development into maturity. To the judicious counsels of this celebrated artist Talma was indebted for the necessary self-confidence which induced him to disregard the unfavourable criticism of his friends, and prepare himself for an ordeal far more perilous and decisive than the one he had as yet encountered—namely, his approaching début at the *Théâtre Français*. He appeared there for the first time November 21, 1787,

as *Séide* in Voltaire's tragedy of *Mahomet*, and, according to contemporary accounts, with complete success. "This young actor," says the *Journal de Paris*, "promises well. He possesses every quality requisite for the line of parts selected by him; his face, figure, and voice leave nothing to be desired. He was deservedly applauded, particularly in the three first acts; and with study and application bids fair to attain a brilliant position."

The prediction was verified sooner than the writer could possibly have anticipated, Talma's admission as pensionnaire being at once unanimously agreed to; and his definitive reception as member of the society dating from 1789. Of him it might truly be said that "*ses premiers essais furent des coups de maître*." More fortunate than his great predecessor Lekain, he had no long and wearisome apprenticeship to undergo, no intrigues to baffle, no professional rivalries to fear; the path to celebrity lay open before him, and he was not a man to miss the opportunity. Even at this early stage of his career, his society was courted by the principal dramatists of the day. One of his biographers relates that after a performance of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, in which he had played *Pylade* in company with Larive, the authors assembled in that actor's dressing-room, including Ducis, Palissot, and Lemierre, overwhelmed him with compliments, and his good-natured chef d'emploi, then on the point of retiring, openly expressed his satisfaction at leaving behind him so worthy a successor. A still greater proof of the esteem accorded to his talent was the choice made of him by Marie Joseph Chénier, November 4, 1789, as the representative of his Charles the Ninth, the triumphant reception of which tragedy, principally due to the powerful acting of its chief interpreter, was eventually destined to destroy the harmony hitherto existing between the *Comédie Française* and its new recruit.

The Revolution had already commenced, and the theatre, as has invariably been the case in Paris on similar occasions, had become a political arena, devoted to the wordy warfare of conflicting parties. Every allusion in the slightest degree applicable to passing events, was eagerly seized upon, and vehemently applauded or frantically hissed, according to the temper of the audience; and Charles the Ninth, abounding in claps-traps, and containing moreover divers anti-

monarchical tirades much appreciated by the republican portion of the spectators, its popularity was a foregone conclusion. Such, indeed, was its attraction that the Government, anxious to prevent the nightly scandals arising from a source over which it had practically no control, hinted to the actors the expediency of temporarily withdrawing the piece; and for some weeks it had disappeared from the bills. This veto, however, being in direct opposition to the majority, only made matters worse; and on July 21, 1790, the federal deputies of Provence, headed by Mirabeau, assembled in large numbers in the pit of the *Théâtre Français*, and imperatively demanded that Charles the Ninth should be given on the following evening. Naudet, who was at that moment on the stage, and who, having been forewarned of their project, had his answer ready, replied that owing to the illness of Madame Vestris and St. Prix, both of whom had important parts in the tragedy, it would be impossible for some days to comply with their desire; upon which the tumult increased tenfold, and Naudet, unable to make himself heard, retired. At this critical juncture Talma stepped forward. "Messieurs," he said, "your wish shall be gratified. I will answer for Madame Vestris, who is too sincere a patriot to refuse her co-operation; the part of the Cardinal can be read, and to-morrow you shall have Charles the Ninth." Thereupon shouts of applause, mingled with menaces and imprecations on the unpopular comedians, rang through the house; in the midst of which Talma withdrew behind the scenes, where he and Naudet met face to face. One angry word brought on another, and blows were finally exchanged, the result being a duel, which happily had no serious consequences. Things, however, had gone too far to admit of any amicable adjustment of the quarrel. A few of the actors took part with Talma, but the majority decided against him, and voted his exclusion from the society. Upon this the Municipal Council interfered, and insisted on his readmission, which, after much discussion, was agreed to; but any permanent reconciliation was henceforth impossible, and on April 1, 1791, he voluntarily resigned his position of *sociétaire*, and, together with Dugazon, Grandmesnil, Madame Vestris, and Mdlle. Desgarcins, quitted the *Comédie Française* for the theatre recently erected in the *Rue Richelieu*, which had been opened under the especial patronage of Chénier, Ducis,

Fabre d'Eglantine, Lemercier, and other leading dramatists of the day.

On the 19th of the same month he married Mdlle. Julie Careau, whose salon, famous under the monarchy as the resort of the most eminent personages, political and literary, of the period, had maintained its prestige since the commencement of the Revolution. Among its regular frequenters were Condorcet and Vergniaud, with whom, as well as with most of the Girondins, Talma became intimately acquainted. He then owned a house in the Rue Chantier—subsequently sold to General Bonaparte—where he gave a splendid entertainment in honour of Dumouriez, on his return from the army of the north. Chénier, Méhul, and the entire Gironde were present on the occasion; and Marat, who had not been invited, came of his own accord, and profited by the opportunity to address some uncomplimentary invectives to the victorious general, who coolly turned his back upon him. While this was going on, Dugazon evinced his disgust at the intrusion by heating a shovel and sprinkling it with perfume, "for the purpose," as he audibly remarked, "of purifying the air which had been infected by the presence of such a monster." This malicious pleasantry, perfectly understood by the individual alluded to, nearly cost our hero his head; on the following day he, and the other "conspirators assembled in his house," were denounced by Marat, and from that moment his name was on the list of the suspected.

During the Reign of Terror he lived in perpetual dread of being summoned before the fatal tribunal; but this constant apprehension, far from paralysing his artistic talent, imparted to his acting a feverish energy which electrified his auditors; and he doubtless owed his exemption from arrest, and its probable consequences, to their passionate admiration of his genius. Strangely enough, after the ninth Thermidor, he was accused of having participated in the crimes of the very Jacobins by whom he had been proscribed, as well as of having contributed to the imprisonment of Fleury, St. Prix, and other members of the Théâtre Français in 1793. This report spread rapidly, and one evening, on his appearance in Epicharis et Néron, he was received with a storm of hisses. Divesting himself for a moment of the imperial dignity, and advancing to the footlights: "Citizens," he said, "I

have been, and still am a partisan of liberty, but I have no sympathy with assassins. The Reign of Terror has brought me nothing but affliction, for most of my friends have perished on the scaffold." This justification, applauded to the echo, was speedily confirmed by the testimony of Larive and Mdlle. Contat, both of whom explicitly declared that they had been indebted for their safety to the intervention of Talma; the former stating that, when the order for his arrest had been signed by Henriot, he had been enabled to escape pursuit by a timely warning communicated at great personal risk by his old comrade; and the latter, in a note addressed to the editor of the *Républicain Français*, alluding to the kindness shown her by the tragedian and his wife, and indignantly repelling the charge against him as an utterly groundless calumny.

About this time he made the acquaintance of Bonaparte; and, referring to his intimacy with the then obscure lieutenant, mentions an absurd story circulated at a later period. "It was positively affirmed," says Talma, "that I instructed him how to play his part of emperor. Had such a necessity arisen, he would certainly have been the master, and I the pupil." It is but justice to Napoleon to add that, during his entire reign, his friendly interest in the career of the actor never diminished. Once a week, at least, Talma went to the Tuileries, timing his visit according to the hour of the emperor's breakfast; and on such occasions a long discussion on literary and dramatic topics ensued, and the recent performances of the artist were elaborately criticised. One instance may be given in the tragedian's own words. "The day after I had played *Cæsar* in *La Mort de Pompée* at Fontainebleau, I arrived at my usual hour; and found that my interpretation of the character had not satisfied the emperor. "While addressing Pompey in the opening scene," he said, "you are too much in earnest; *Cæsar* is no Jacobin, he only argues against the royal authority because he is aware that his Romans are listening to him. He is far from believing that the throne, which is in reality the object of his desire, is a thing to be despised. You should show by your tone and manner that what he says is exactly the contrary to what he thinks."

His first marriage having been annulled by divorce in 1801, Talma contracted a second in the ensuing year with Mdlle. Caroline Vanhove, one of the most talented

actresses of the Théâtre Français.* With her he started in September, 1808, for Erfurth, where the meeting between Napoleon, Alexander, and several other potentates had been arranged to take place. On his arrival the emperor sent for him, and after promising him "un beau parterre de rois," examined the list of pieces selected for representation, and ordered *La Mort de César* to be added to the number. In vain Talma urged the impolicy of offering so suggestive a production to the assembled sovereigns; the imperial will was law, and to the evident surprise and embarrassment of the spectators the tragedy was played. "Never," says our hero, "was seen so extraordinary a spectacle; the actors themselves were paralysed by the singularity of their position; we hardly knew how to speak, look, or gesticulate; and at the close of the performance my wife, who was among the audience, overcome by her anxiety, fainted away." In the same year Talma played before Goethe at Weimar, and was highly complimented by the poet; Genast also, in his *Journal of an Old Actor*, thus records his youthful impressions of the great tragedian. "His voice was so clear and powerful, he spoke with such expression, and his gestures were so admirably natural, that he quite stood out from the others, who appeared to me little better than mere ranters."

On his return to Paris, Talma devoted himself with fresh ardour to the study of his art, and was amply rewarded by a popularity which every succeeding year only tended to augment. One dissident alone from the general enthusiasm steadily refused to acknowledge his superiority. This was Geoffroy, the dramatic critic of the *Journal de l'Empire*, who, by his constant and acrimonious attacks, so incensed the irascible Roscius, that one evening, December 9, 1812, when the censor was quietly installed in his box at the Théâtre Français, he caused the door to be opened, and administered to his persecutor a severe castigation. This method of taking the law in his own hands was universally disapproved, and Talma himself afterwards deeply regretted having

adopted it; but the storm eventually blew over, and the only notice taken of the circumstance by Geoffroy was the publication of an article, wherein he declared that in future he would leave the actor to his flatterers, and neither speak well nor ill of him—a promise, by the way, which he forgot to keep. A coloured caricature, entitled *Les fureurs d'Oreste*, and representing the scene in the theatre with more or less fidelity, obtained great success in the print-shops at the time, but is now extremely rare.

Grateful for the kindness he had uniformly received from the emperor, and hearing of his proposed abdication, Talma addressed to him a letter, which, coming at a moment when friends and fortune seemed alike to have forsaken him, touched him deeply; on their next meeting, during the Hundred Days, Napoleon observed to his correspondent that he had brought the answer in person. "However," he added, "I am glad that Louis the Eighteenth appreciated your talent; he ought to know what good acting is, for he has seen Lekain."

After an unprecedentedly brilliant career of nearly thirty-nine years, this great artist made his final appearance in public, June 13, 1826, as Charles the Sixth in Delaville's tragedy of that name. He had been suffering for some weeks from an internal complaint, which he imagined to be merely temporary; and, although in the course of the next three months the disease progressed so rapidly that it was evident to all but himself that his end was approaching, he received his friends as usual, and until within a few hours of his death conversed with them on his favourite subject—the regeneration of the drama. At length, on the morning of October 19, 1826, he expired, apparently without suffering; his last intelligible words were, "Voltaire—like Voltaire!" Two days later, his funeral at Père la Chaise was attended by an immense concourse of people, including members of every class of society from the peer to the artisan; the customary discourses being pronounced by Lafon, in the name of the Comédie Française, and by the Academicians Jouy and Arnault, as representatives of dramatic literature.

It is evident, from the unanimous testimony of his contemporaries, that at no epoch of his life had the genius of Talma so nearly approached perfection as during the period immediately preceding his retirement from the stage. He was then in

* When very young, she had personated the dumb boy in Bouilly's *L'Abbé de l'Épée* with such touching expression, that the spectators were moved to tears. "If," said a writer of the time, "she can affect us so deeply without the aid of words, what would she do with them?" Madame Talma survived her husband many years, and after his death became, by a second marriage, Comtesse de Chalot.

the plenitude of his powers; and those alone who had seen him in his younger days could fairly estimate the gradual progress in artistic excellence, which time and unremitting study had combined to develop. Fleury, who had been an eye-witness of his early successes, and who, from the political antagonism formerly existing between them, can certainly not be deemed an over-partial judge, thus speaks of him in one of the concluding chapters of his memoirs: "Talma invests modern tragedy, which is in itself only a form or shadow, with reality; for without him it would not exist. Nowadays, the tragedian is no longer the interpreter of the poet; the latter merely furnishes the sketch which in the artist's hands becomes a picture. With such insufficient materials at his command, Talma has, during the last twenty years, in my opinion, performed miracles."

A still more graphic description is that given by Macready, in a passage from his diary dated 1822: "The genius of Talma rose above all the conventionality of schools. Every turn and movement as he trod the stage might have given a model for the sculptor's art, and yet all was effected with such apparent absence of preparation as made him seem utterly unconscious of the dignified and graceful attitudes he presented. His voice was flexible and powerful, and his delivery articulate to the finest point without a trace of pedantry. . . . His object was not to dazzle or surprise by isolated effects; the character was his aim;—he put on the man, and was attentive to every minutest trait that might distinguish him. To my judgment he was the most finished artist of his time; not below Keau in his most energetic displays, and far above him in the refinement of his taste and extent of his research; equalling Kemble in dignity, unfettered by his stiffness and formality."

This accomplished actor occasionally visited London, and treated the amateurs of our metropolis to a taste of his quality, by performing selections from his most popular pieces in company with Mlle. Georges. He was an intimate friend and great admirer of John Kemble, and was present, not only at that tragedian's farewell appearance, but also at the dinner subsequently given in his honour. He spoke English fluently, but with a strong accent; that he could write it perfectly is evident from the letter quoted in Mr. Raymond's memoir of Elliston, in acknow-

ledgment of a handsome Roman sword sent to him by the Drury Lane manager. This epistle, highly interesting and expressed with equal elegance and correctness, concludes as follows: "God bless you, my dear Elliston, and let me tell you, like the doctor in our Molière, 'Salus, honor, et argentum, atque bonum appetitum.' Your ever well-wisher and friend, Talma."

In private life he was thoroughly amiable, fond of society, and entirely free from pretension. Once off the stage, he was no longer the actor, but the polished and genial man of the world, eager to oblige others, and never happier than when it was in his power to serve them. Generous and open-handed to excess, he was far more disposed to squander than to hoard; and through his recklessness in money matters, found himself more than once in embarrassed circumstances. "If my tastes were as expensive as yours," one day remarked his wife; "if I wished for diamonds and brilliant equipages, what would you say?" "In that case, my dear," coolly replied Talma, "I should say that we were likely to be still more in debt than we are now."

His chief delight consisted in the embellishment of his country house at Brunoy. There he was in the habit of organising private theatricals, the pieces being mostly selected from the répertoire of the Variétés. Like his successor Rachel, who considered her Célémène and Marinette masterpieces of acting, he strangely enough imagined his forte to be not tragedy but farce; and after a deplorable failure in *Le Désespoir de Jocrisse*, gravely asked his friends if he did not act it better than Brunet.

He had a bad memory for names and faces, and often fell into conversation with strangers, fancying them to be old acquaintances. While walking with his wife one morning, a young man accosted him familiarly, and engaged him in a discussion on dramatic topics. Talma was in high spirits, and enchanted with his agreeable companion; and when they separated, it was with a promise on both sides to meet again soon. "Who is that gentleman?" enquired his wife when they were alone. "Ma foi, I haven't the least idea," replied the tragedian. "But you seemed to know him very well; you called him your friend." "Very likely; but now I think of it, I don't remember ever having seen him before to-day."

His correspondents not unfrequently

suffered from his habitual forgetfulness. One of them, who had been absent four years in America, and had in vain waited for an answer to his letters, on his return to Paris hastened to the theatre, and reproached the actor for his unpardonable neglect. "Mon cher," said Talma, in a tone of unfeigned surprise, "you are doing me an injustice. There is a letter of four pages for you in my desk. You shall have it to-morrow; but pray don't accuse me of negligence again."

When he played Titus, he wore his hair cut after the fashion of a Roman bust. This coiffure à la Titus became the rage; and the services of the hairdresser of the Théâtre Français were so continually in request, that Talma, seeing one evening the shop floor covered with the spoils of many heads, laughingly remarked that although Titus might, for all he knew to the contrary, have lost a day, his coiffeur certainly had not.

Previous to his second marriage he was for a time deeply smitten by the charms of Mdlle. Bourgoin, one of the most fascinating actresses of the Comédie Française. An extract from an unpublished letter to Madame Dugazon would seem to prove that his attachment was but indifferently responded to. "Mdlle. Bourgoin is the plague of my life; I feel that if I have not the courage to break with her at once, I shall end by being the unhappiest of men. I will not see her, for I know my own weakness, and it is time to put a stop to the uncertainty that tortures me. Go to her, I beg of you, this very day, and ask her for my letters, if by chance she has not destroyed them. She shall not keep them to make me the laughing-stock of her future lovers." Not long after, Mdlle. Bourgoin consoled herself for the defection of her admirer by accepting the homage of the minister Chaptal, an event in her career recorded as follows by a complacent penny-a-liner of the period:

Tremblez tous devant moi, Lafon, Fleury, Talma,
Tremblez tous devant moi, car Monsieur Chaptal
m'a!

One more extract from a letter, also unpublished, addressed to the Duc de Duras, first gentleman of the chamber, and dated March, 1817, is curious as particularly referring to certain misunderstandings between him and the management of the Théâtre Français since the Restoration. After expressing his desire, for special motives, to relinquish his position as

member of the society for that of pensionnaire, with a salary of twenty thousand francs and six months' leave of absence—for the present year only—and adding that the proposal has not been favourably entertained by his brother-actors, he says: "I am very far from esteeming myself at a higher rate than I am worth; but I cannot, without affecting a false modesty, avoid feeling that I am still fully capable of contributing for some time longer to the prosperity of the theatre and the success of dramatic art."

According to M. Regnier of the Comédie Française, none of the numerous portraits of Talma, engraved or lithographed, are entirely satisfactory. The best he considers to be the one painted by Picot four years before the actor's death, and engraved by Lignon. He cites also a sketch by Gérard, and a lithograph, signed Amélie M. R., as giving a tolerably correct idea of the original.

STRANGE WATERS.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON,

AUTHOR OF "OLYMPIA," "PEARL AND EMERALD," &c. &c.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I. A DELPHIC ORACLE.

THE Straits of Dover can scarcely be regarded as especially strange waters; but few are they in whom familiarity breeds contempt for them. On a certain last Monday in Lent, in particular, and after sundown—to be more particular still—few who had to do with them but were as shy of them as of strangers, and none parted with them but as from bitter enemies. Neither steward nor stewardess had a sinecure that evening. A strong wind had been blowing up the Channel for a week, and had left the waves to settle as they best could with one another—like fellow-citizens, who fly to civil war as the only means of conquering somebody when a foreign enemy has swept over them. The hearts of the passengers on board the Dover packet were now left somewhere with the moon when the vessel sank, and now far under water when she swung up to the moon, and—in short, everyone had a worse time than anybody but a stewardess cares to dwell upon: as bad as the extraction of a second tooth, and worse than the rejection of a first offer.

But it was over at last. The packet lay along the pier, too late to afford a spectacle for those disciples of Lucretius who enjoy

nothing so much as to stand in all the self-satisfaction of a secure breakfast, and to compare their own placid complexions with the green cheeks and yellow eyes that file before them. England grew dear, indeed. Even the next-door neighbours, and therefore the natural enemies of that nation—perfidy, bourgeoisie, all else that is despicable, excepting poor—felt a sense of serene relief on seeing at last those white cliffs which even in the wildest moonlight look the very type of terra firma, and the castle, which has probably seen more of cosmopolitan humanity than any other building in the world. No; there is no country so dear as England—excepting France, when, on an equally bad night, we cross the same strait the other way.

"Ilma!" moaned a voice from out of a bundle of furs, that seemed to have been thrown down upon deck haphazard.

"Giulia," answered a wail from another heap of wraps hard by.

"I am dying."

"I am dead, Giulia."

"Where is Thérèse?"

The wail did not answer.

"Ilma, per l'amor di Dio—go and bring me Thérèse."

"I daresay she is seeing after the things."

"And leaving me to die. Oh, but I suffer! And you lie dozing there. But it is all for oneself in this world."

"Ah—in the world. But I'm out of it, Giulia."

"Then you are not selfish any more. Per carità, bring me Thérèse."

"Yes, Giulia."

The disembodied spirit made an effort and rose.

"Now that you are up, Ilma, please look for my salts, and my handkerchief, and my fan. They must be very near me, I'm sure, but I dare not open my eyes. Where are you?"

"Here, Giulia. And—and—I never will be here any more."

Of course she who asked for help needed it the less, and she who tried to give it needed it the more. But that was the way of the world about that period. Giulia still lay passively among the furs, and talked, and ordered, while Ilma crept, ghost-like and woe-begone, across the deck, and did her best to pick up a vinaigrette that lay within three inches of Giulia's hand. But in her prostration, and in the dark, she fell forward, and in trying, selfishly, to save herself, dropped the vinaigrette and broke it in pieces.

Giulia, who had been too prostrate even to reach out a finger or raise an eyelid, started up from among her furs lioness-fashion.

"Asino! stupidaccio! If there is one thing I care for on earth it is that vinaigrette. It has been over the Atlantic, yes, and the Lago Maggiore; and has never been broken before. It is a bad omen—it is a warning. I had sooner you had broken your leg, or anything. It only happened to me twice before. Once I broke a fan, just before an engagement at Brussels, and the theatre was burned before I had appeared ten times; and once I broke a plate, and then a new dress was spoiled by the gravy. And this is now three times—it is the third warning. I will not land. I will go back again."

Ilma heaved as deep a sigh as she dared. "To-night, Giulia?"

"So soon as the ship goes back again. Thérèse! Thérèse!"

"Perhaps she is at the custom-house."

"Then go and ask for me when this ship goes back. I will not land in England, no, not for an hour."

"And break your engagement?"

"Corpo di bacco—si! What is an engagement to me? I have broken twenty—but never that vinaigrette before."

"But what shall you say to the impresario?"

"I shall say that I do what I please. We will go back again—now."

"Giulia—I cannot go back again. I should die of agony. Oh, Giulia, for the love of heaven, let us sleep to-night on land!"

"It is true I must have some soup—but no. I will not be mad. Thérèse shall bring me some bouillon, and I will take it here."

It was certainly hard, after having escaped at last from those ills of the sea, which are harder to bear than its dangers, into the immediate prospect of rest and comfort, to be ordered to resign the dream, and to set her face seaward again. Ilma looked desperately at the sky and the sea, and yearningly at the shore, where the lights seemed blinking a welcome. But it was clear enough that Giulia was one of those whose caprices are destinies to themselves and laws to others.

"And what is to become of me?"

"Of you? Oh, you will be well again when you have eaten some bouillon. If I can go back to Calais, you can—nobody suffers like me."

"I cannot, Giulia. I will leave the ship,

and sleep on the pier. I would rather get my death of cold, than— oh, it is horrible.”

“You are a coward, Ilma—a child.”

“I don’t know that it’s more like a child,” said Ilma sullenly, “to be afraid of the sea, where one might be drowned to death any minute, or burned, or shaken inside out, than to be frightened because one breaks a smelling-bottle. I don’t see how staying isn’t braver than running away. And I thought, Giulia—”

“You would think nothing of such things, if you knew what I know. And, in short, I intend to go back again.”

“All the others are on land, and Thérèse will have got the things to the hotel,” said Ilma—not having learned that the surest way to turn a caprice into a resolve is to tell a woman like Giulia that her whim is eccentric, or against reason.

“Let them, and let her. The others may go on, and Thérèse must have the things brought back again.”

“I—you will die of—”

“Very well. I will die. But I will not land.”

Ilma looked appealingly to earth and heaven—everywhere, save to the pitiless sea—and clasped and wrung her hands in despair. They were the last passengers left on board, and she doubted not but that Giulia would remain, in spite of anything that could be said or done.

“I don’t think they will let you stay.”

“No? Then I shall stay without letting. If they asked me to stay, perhaps I should go. Who knows?”

“I wish the captain would fall in love with you.”

“He shall, if I can stay no other way—yes, sallow and thin as I am. But here I am, and here I stay. Go to the custom-house and find Thérèse. Tell her that I return by this or by the next packet, and find a porter to bring back the luggage to the pier. I shall speak to the captain, and if I may remain on board, well; if not, I will lie down among the luggage. The pier is not the shore, after all. And then go to the hotel and order them to send me some bouillon, and some champagne, and a pillow, and some bread. Here is my purse, if they want to be paid. Yes; I will wait upon the pier after all. It is not the shore—and I shall be more comfortable than here.”

Ilma, too ill for anything but obedience, crept off, in all the gloom of martyrdom, without any of its consolations, to sacrifice herself against her will to another woman’s

whim. Clari wrapped her furs round her, and sat down on a stone bench to revel in her self-inflicted martyrdom—all the more enjoyable because it was absolutely without reason. Since she had left Hinchford, all the world that cared in the least to gossip about her—and it was to the full as large as any other special world—knew that her capricious eccentricities had increased, were increasing, and only ought not to be diminished, because, in that case, the world would have had less to talk about than ever. As it was, people were now beginning to talk less about the magnificent voice, than about the oddities of Mademoiselle Clari. She seemed to take a perverse delight in doing anything that would make somebody stare, if it were only a crossing-sweeper, by giving him a piece of twenty francs, instead of one of two sous. In great things or small, it seemed to be all one to her. She would make engagements, as if for the express purpose of breaking them at the last hour, or order herself to be woken in the afternoon, that she might rise at some unearthly hour in the early morning. She would buy some work of art at an extravagant price, and leave it behind her at a railway-station, on the ground of its being inconvenient to carry. She had been hissed at Naples for some shadowy musical offence, too subtle for non-Italian ears to grasp, and narrowly escaped imprisonment for hurling at her audience the name of “canaglia” from the stage. She sent the unfortunate Thérèse nearly mad with her whims about dress, and would have sent her quite mad, but that the *femme de chambre* found such caprices not unprofitable. She went into rages over crumpled rose-leaves, and yet, at other times, would revel in discomfort and hardship—so long as it was perfectly avoidable. She would have quarrelled with Providence for not making it rain roast ortolans in Kamshatka, and yet, in Paris, would take it into her head to dress like a quakeress and live like an anchorite—for, perhaps, a whole half day at a time. That the breaking of a smelling-bottle should prove cause enough for her to turn back from England, a week before the season began, was in nowise strange for her. The only strange thing about it was, that she should have had so good a reason for her whim. Mostly, she was best satisfied with having no reason at all. Reason is so painfully and vulgarly reasonable.

She had intended, or rather planned,

that she, and her maid Thérèse, and Mademoiselle Ilma Krasinska—a young Polish soprano who had made a lamentable fiasco in Italy—should spend a comfortable night at Dover and, as comfortably as might be, travel to London the following afternoon. She avoided the night express, because that was a quicker, cheaper, and more usual mode of proceeding. She carried Mademoiselle Krasinska with her because the Polish soprano was both a social and a musical failure—at any rate she had no other reason, unless it were the innate propensity of prime *donne* to patronise and make much of those who can never hope to rival them. Cheap generosity is beyond all question the greatest luxury in the world; and Mademoiselle Krasinska had, for some weeks past, proved that the star's condescension had not been sown upon ungrateful soil. So lively was her sense of favours to come that nothing would part her from her patroness, whose whims she obeyed as divine laws. And therefore, and for all these reasons and unreasons, Mademoiselle Clari was sitting out of doors alone in the moonlight, deliberately feeling as ill as she could, delightfully self-conscious of being homeless and friendless, deserted alike by the maid who had gone to look after the luggage and the protégée whom she had herself despatched to see after the bouillon, and thinking over the broken vinaigrette in tragic despair. People who are bent on being miserable need not be so ingenious as Clari to invent miseries, when they obstinately refuse to come by nature.

But there was more in the vinaigrette than common *sal ammoniac*, after all.

Though nobody ever said it, though not even her looking-glass ever hinted it, there was no doubt about it—the youth of Mademoiselle Clari was past and gone. She had worn well, had lasted perhaps even better than she had fairly worn; but not even the stars of heaven have a voice for ever in the music of the spheres. There are suns now in the skies that have not shone there always, and even the sun which we know the best is supposed to be dying and growing cold while he gives light and heat to more than a hundred worlds. A thousand years or so are not much to him; but a great singer is a patriarch only in the eyes of a butterfly. She comes nowhence, and she goes nowhither. And it was now the last generation of opera-goers who had made Clari a queen

of song. Already there were those who said to their nephews and nieces: "Ah, but you should have heard her fifteen years ago—when she was in her prime!"

When she was—that is the root of the whole matter. There are those living who have seen a great queen, whom kings and queens of smaller nations have honoured, hissed by a gallery of gods at half-a-crown a head, who could only hear the tuneless voice, and missed altogether the pathos which lay in it because it was out of tune and tried to sing. They saw the heavy, awkward Lucrezia pulled by main force from her knees by a Gennaro who might have been, not her son, but her grandson; and they did not say, "It is time to send her off—but let the last time be with flowers." Some there were who only saw and heard the past, but these were few—and how could the rest care for what their fathers and mothers have heard? And so the ex-queen departed from among us in hisses and laughter, and there was a sorry end of her—before she died. Clari was not yet in sight of this pass, but her inmost heart knew that there were new stars with voices not equal to what hers once had been, but at least as pleasant to the new ears of new men as hers was now. When men mortgage their souls, according to the legends, a time is always specified for foreclosure. It had not been specified when Noëmi Baruc sold herself on the Corso; but that was because time is of the essence of such a contract as hers had been. Youth was leaving her, beauty was following, voice was hardening; and how was Clari, of all women, to bear the doom of a dethroned queen? She might indeed retire with her glory still upon her. So people say—but only people who do not know. Those who know need not be told why; those who say it could not be made to understand. A retired soprano is as much a contradiction in terms as a retired statesman. And how was she to make a bed of laurels for herself on Lago Maggiore when she had not even the remembrance of love to make up for being absolutely alone? She had not so much as a niece to wait for her shoes.

No wonder that she put up with a protégée; no wonder that, after her fashion, she tried to impress her personality upon the world. It might not have been the best or wisest way, but it was hers. She could alternately spoil and trample upon Mademoiselle Krasinska according to her mood, and she could assert herself to the

end, and so long as a shred or patch of voice was left her. Even when the world would no longer listen, it could be made to stare. She could take at least the world's eyes—with which, for the most part, men hear and listen—and concentrate them upon the most singular of prime donne. Nothing of all this was in her mind. But it was somewhere, and the spirit, or demon, of wasted womanhood drove her on, from shore to shore, and from whim to whim.

Of late, things had not been going quite as she would have had them. There was that "canaglia" episode, in which her presence of mind had only saved her from a musical fiasco, by turning it into a triumph of notoriety. A new woman from New York was going to do wonderful things, according to the New York papers. There had been a cabal against her in Berlin. She had conquered, but she might not conquer a second time. Her caprices had cost her more money than would have bought twenty villas on Lake Como. It was becoming as needful to sing for money as for glory. And so it was with a sort of vague foreboding that she set her face towards the London season—even towards that faithful city which will bear with ruins till they absolutely tumble down, and will pay not for what it enjoys so much as for what it is told, on the best authority, other people used to enjoy. She did not go with a light heart to victory.

And so, when, all ill from the sea, wet, and utterly out of temper, the vinaigrette fell, it was no common omen to her Ghetto-trained mind. England, last year, had been full of strange experience for her—what was the England of this year to prove? She was not alone in feeling that prescience of fatality which says, Fly. And it is not in the Ghetto or on the stage that one learns to take a sensible view of such things. It was a warning, and she was warned.

Back came Ilma, followed by Thérèse and the luggage.

"There is no boat till to-morrow morning," said Mademoiselle Krasinska.

"Then I shall stay here till to-morrow morning. And the bouillon?"

"It will come."

"Ah, and so will the rain, mon Dieu!"

said Thérèse, looking up to the sky. "I feel a drop on my nose."

"Ah!" sighed Clari, not without satisfaction in thinking how uncomfortable everybody was going to be. She was craving for sympathy, and this was the readiest road she could find.

"Prosper will say you dared not come to London," said Ilma, fixing her eyes on one particular star.

"Prosper!" cried Clari, starting up and flushing.

"Yes, Giulia; that is what he will say."

"Prosper! That I do not dare! Corpo d'un Cane! He thinks I cannot do without him. That he is my voice—he, the humbug, the impostor, the charlatan! Ah, but he shall see, Thérèse!"

"Madame!"

"Have the luggage back to the hotel. I go to London by the first train."

"Madame!"

"Yes; I dare. And he shall see. I will sing him into little pieces. Ilma, give me my vinaigrette, if you please, and your arm. I go to the hotel."

"The vinaigrette? But you can take mine."

"Ah!" exclaimed Clari again, in another tone. "I remember. Per Bacco! what is to be done?"

"Giulia, how can you think so much of a bit of broken glass, when——"

"Ilma—it is not for nothing that I broken something for the third time, with Prosper for my enemy. I felt it all without the breaking. There are women in the—in Rome who would know. But Prosper shall not say I do not dare. But no——"

She stopped suddenly; one foot seemed to advance, the other to draw her back, against, or rather without, her will. Ilma looked at Thérèse in despair, which was reflected to the full.

"Ah, bestia that I am!" said Clari. "As if to break a glass were not the happiest omen in the world! It should be a wine-glass; but the vinaigrette was glass, and why should the shape matter? It was a plate and a fan that I broke before. Dio mercè!"

"Then—we go on to London?"

"For what else are we come? Does one come to England to go to Moscow? As for Prosper, he shall see!"